

MINUTES

CITY PLAN COMMISSION/ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

NOVEMBER 15, 2010

The City Plan Commission/Architectural Review Board of the City of Clayton, Missouri, met upon the above date at 5:30 p.m., Chairman Harold Sanger presiding. Upon roll call, the following responded:

Present:

Chairman Harold Sanger
Steve Lichtenfeld, Aldermanic Representative
Craig S. Owens, City Manager
Jim Liberman
Marc Lopata
Scott Wilson

Absent:

Ron Reim

Also Present:

Susan Istenes, Director of Planning & Development Services
Jason Jaggi, Senior Planner
Kevin O'Keefe, City Attorney

Chairman Sanger welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked that all cell phone ringers be turned off or muted and that conversations take place outside the room so as not to disrupt the meeting. He announced that new recording equipment has been installed and will be used for this meeting for the first time and asked everyone wishing to speak on the record to please speak into the microphones, which must be on to ensure proper recording.

MINUTES

The minutes of the October 4, 2010 meeting were presented for approval. The minutes were approved, after having been previously distributed to each member.

Susan Istenes announced that the applicant for the proposed monument sign at 141 N. Meramec has asked that the proposal be postponed and that staff anticipates its appearance on the next agenda.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW – RETAINING WALL – 515 S. CENTRAL AVENUE

John Flood and Peggy Stock, owners, were in attendance at the meeting.

Susan Istenes explained that this is a request for review of the design and materials associated with the installation of a modular block retaining wall, measuring a total of forty-five (45) feet in length, along the southern side yard. The finished retaining wall ranges in height from seven (7) inches to two (2) feet, (3) three inches and faces the neighboring property to the south. Installation of the wall is near completion but is presently suspended pending approval by the Architectural Review Board. Because the retaining wall is less than four (4) feet in height, a Building Permit is not required for installation. The modular block retaining wall replaces a deteriorated railroad tie wall. An existing cedar fence above the wall will be cleaned and reused. The new retaining wall is constructed of gray Versa-Lok modular blocks six (6) inches in height. The Architectural Review Guidelines prohibit the use of Versa-Lok material for retaining walls that are visible from the street or from the ground level of any adjoining residence. Davis Place Subdivision Trustee approval has been submitted with comments. The retaining wall is slightly visible from South Central Avenue, but highly visible from the adjacent property to the south. The owners of the adjacent property to the south have submitted a letter to City staff indicating that they do not object to the material of the new modular block retaining wall. The Architectural Review Guidelines specify that retaining walls should be constructed of brick, stone, or stucco material to match the main structure on the subject property. The use of a modular block system for a retaining wall does not meet the intentions of the Architectural Review Guidelines for maintaining visual integrity; however, the use of Belgard Celtik modular systems have been regularly approved by the Architectural Review Board. The wall material at this site is a traditional, gray Versa-Lok product which does not possess the qualities of higher end modular block products which are characterized by tumbled edges, varying block sizes and color patterns. Staff believes the visibility of the wall from the public view is limited and the low height of the wall minimizes its impact. Further, the applicant indicates that ivy is used as a ground cover adjacent to this wall and will be allowed to extend over the wall, thereby breaking up the appearance. The scalloped wood fence will also be reinstalled. For these reasons, staff believes the appearance of the Versa-Lok retaining wall will be minimal and recommends approval with the condition that the owners allow the ground ivy to spread over portions of the wall to enhance its appearance.

Mr. Flood presented photographs of his property to the members. He indicated that they have done a lot of work to their property since they moved in 12 years ago and that one of the projects was to replace the deteriorating railroad tie wall. He stated that they installed the scalloped fence after they moved in. Pictures of the old wall and the new wall were presented as well as photographs of the property taken from the street were also presented. He stated that the low wall is not very visible and cannot be seen from North Meramec. He stated that since the wall is below 4 feet in height and no building permit required, he thought it was okay to proceed with installation. He added that they believe the wall to be an upgrade and the believe it is a nice looking wall.

Chairman Sanger asked who owns the adjacent walkway.

Mr. Flood indicated it is a City walkway.

Mr. Flood informed the members that his neighbors approve of the wall and that they are also in attendance this evening to provide support.

Steve Lichtenfeld commented that the property is kept beautiful and if the ivy is allowed to grow over the wall, the side yard will appear nice as well.

Marc Lopata voiced his concern regarding the wall cap, as those stones move.

Mr. Flood informed the members that the cap will be glued down.

Marc Lopata questioned what the decision of this Board would be if the wall had not already been constructed.

Chairman Sanger indicated that he will ask staff to research the reasons for the strong objection to versa-lok and believes years ago, versa-lok was looked at differently. He added that he is uncomfortable allowing the use of a material made by only one manufacturer.

Steve Lichtenfeld stated that although he agrees with the review process, and that if a 4' or higher wall would have had to receive ARB approval and a building permit, that maybe the regulations need to be tightened up somewhat. He stated that before a change in policy is implemented, this Board should review such change, but currently, versa-lok, per policy, is not allowed. He stated that he does not want to see a precedent set.

Bob Richman, 605 S. Central Avenue, advised the members that he walks the neighborhood twice each day and occasionally uses the cut-through (walkway). He indicated that he did not see the wall being constructed and that it is virtually invisible. He stated that he is impressed with the wall and that it is a nice addition to the neighborhood. He stated that the owners maintain their property beautifully and focus on aesthetics.

Mary Ann Singer, 509 S. Central Avenue, stated that the Floods are wonderful neighbors and that she has a good view of their back yard which is beautiful.

Being no further questions or comments, Scott Wilson made a motion to approve per staff recommendation. The motion was seconded by Steve Lichtenfeld and unanimously approved by the members.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW – ROOFTOP SOLAR PANELS – 78 ABERDEEN PLACE

Eric Swillinger, VP of Business Operations for Straight Up Solar, was in attendance at the meeting.

Susan Istenes explained that this is a request for review of the design and materials associated with the installation of solar panels on the roof of a single family residence in the Hillcrest Subdivision. The installation of these panels was completed without architectural review approval or permits. As a visible exterior alteration to the residence, staff has referred this issue to the Architectural Review Board for approval. According to information submitted by the applicant, eighteen (18) solar panels have been installed on the rear-facing portion of the roof of the two-story house. Product information indicates that each panel is approximately five (5) feet by two and a half (2.5) feet and black in color. The array is mounted on a low-sloping rear shed dormer and measures approximately thirty (30) feet by seven and a half (7.5) feet in total. The photovoltaic

system is tied to the electric grid and produces 4.14 kilowatts. An inverter is mounted on the western end of the rear roof and a disconnect is mounted on the western wall of the residence. Hillcrest Subdivision Trustee approval has been submitted. The solar panels lie flat on the roof dormer and are located on the rear roof slope of the house. These panels are not visible from the street. Staff believes these panels represent a fairly standard installation and are appropriately placed on the rear roof slope of the house and recommend approval with the condition that the applicant apply for and receive a building permit.

Mr. Swillinger noted that they did secure an electrical permit and apologized for not following proper approval procedures.

Steve Lichtenfeld commented that the panels are not noticeable. He noted that contractors need to inquire with the City before beginning a job to determine what City approvals, if any, are necessary. He stated that there has to be a better way to communicate the need for this to the public.

Scott Wilson asked the payback on this project.

Mr. Swillinger replied "about 14 years."

Being no further questions or comments, Steve Lichtenfeld made a motion to approve per staff recommendation. The motion was seconded by Scott Wilson and unanimously approved by the members.

Chairman Sanger referred to the copies of the pamphlets staff distributed in the packets that discuss solar uses and designs.

Susan Istenes indicated that Jason is working on draft regulations and that the information contained in those pamphlets is being used for the research.

Marc Lopata stated that solar panel installation is not without potential hazards (fire, leaks) if not installed properly and that certified installers should be used.

Being no further business for the Plan Commission/Architectural Review Board, this meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Recording Secretary